



In June, 2012, the Portland City Council voted unanimously to rename Portland PP&R’s University Park Community Center in honor of Charles Jordan.

Beloved Civic Leader Charles Jordan, 1937-2014

Courtesy Portland Parks & Recreation
Portland Mayor Charlie Hales issued a mayoral proclamation April 9, honoring the late, beloved Charles Jordan, Portland Parks & Recreation director and City Commissioner, who died last Friday at the age of 77.

Jordan’s son Dion, a Portland Parks board member, was on hand to accept the Mayor’s proclamation.

“Thanks for all the love, condolences and support you all have shared with me and my family,” said an emotional Dion Jordan as he addressed the Mayor and City Commissioners. “My father...was something special.”

“His great saying was ‘Parks are more than just fun and games,’” says Michelle Harper, who worked with Jordan for years in several capacities. “He is a spiritual person with a strong connection to his church, and he saw us all as being connected. Portland’s parks were where we could come together to build community and family.”

Recalling a conversation with his father from a few years ago, Dion remembered Charles Jordan reflecting on his life’s work.

“He said, ‘I never set out to do all this. I never set out to accomplish the things I’ve done’,” recalled Dion. “He said he only wanted to do one thing, and that was the right thing. That he wanted to treat everybody right, love everyone unconditionally, and then he felt like his life would be meaningful. And it has been.”

Jordan helped bring more than 40 new properties into the now nationally-recognized and widely admired PP&R system, including Pioneer Courthouse Square, the Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade, Delta Park, East Portland Community Center (the most utilized in our system) and Southwest Community Center. He was instrumental in obtaining the funding for several large, key renovation projects through the major and much-needed 1994 Parks bond. And he secured the funding to revitalize the center that now bears his name, Charles Jordan Community Center - which serves an area of town that benefits greatly from the center’s huge variety of low-cost, high quality health and recreation offerings.

Jordan’s memorial service will be private, for family only. The Mayor ordered all City flags to fly at half-mast from April 4 (the day of Jordan’s death) through Saturday, April 12.



‘Today you follow, but tomorrow you will be expected to lead.’



Jordan first moved to Oregon in 1970 to work with the federal Model Cities Program, working with local civil rights groups including members of the NAACP.



Jordan was Portland’s first African-American City Commissioner, here pictured with fellow Commissioner Mike Lindberg.



‘Model the way – you never know who is watching and wanting to be just like you.’

Notable Charles Jordan quotes

- “What people don’t understand, they won’t value; what they don’t value, they won’t protect; and what they don’t protect, they will lose.”
- “Today you follow, but tomorrow you will be expected to lead.”
- “If change is to be, it’s up to you and me.”
- “Dreams are simply goals with wings.”
- “Don’t let anyone steal your joy.”
- “Take good care of yourself and you can care for others.”
- “We’re more than just fun and games.”
- “Develop a passion for something and do it well.”
- “Model the way – you never know who is watching and wanting to be just like you.”



As Parks director, Jordan massively increased the city’s parklands, and unveiled new signs on the Wildwood Trail in Forest Park.



The Charles Jordan Community Center dedication featured a special honor from the Native American community.

PHOTOS COURTESY PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION